

June 12, 2008

Labour issues lead Alberta chambers' concerns

The Alberta Chambers of Commerce (ACC) has a strong menu of employment-related issues to bring to government over the next three years.

At its 70th annual Provincial Conference and Policy Session, held May 22 to 24 in Fort Saskatchewan, more than 90 delegates representing chambers from across Alberta approved 30 new policies. These policies have now become part of ACC's 2006 to 2008 Policy Book, which establishes the direction of the chamber federation's business-related advocacy.

The largest number of policies relate to expanding Alberta's labour force, which is the number one concern for businesses in this province.

New policies on this issue recommend the provincial and federal government encourage more Aboriginals to enter the workforce, improve immigration processes, and allow older workers to collect a paycheque without penalizing their pensions and savings.

Another employment-related policy asks the province to enact legislation that protects the jobs of reservists serving in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Other new policies suggest ways of renewing our province's health care system, creating a foreign trade zone to promote value-added processing in Alberta, and ensuring businesses are prepared for a pandemic.

Individual chambers of commerce as diverse as Calgary, Brooks and Grande Prairie developed the policies, which they submitted to ACC for the policy session. The grassroots nature of ACC's policies provides a strong foundation for the organization's advocacy.

The Alberta Chambers of Commerce is a federation of 127 chambers of commerce, which collectively represent 22,000 Alberta businesses.

ACC's three-year policy book is available at www.abchamber.ca.

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